

Intermountain Trails

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Forest In Focus: Caribou-Targhee National Forest

Forest Supervisor—Garth Smelser



Caribou-Targhee Forest Supervisor,
Garth Smelser

In both my military and Forest Service journeys, I have had the pleasure of traversing a diversity of life's trails through job changes, travel, and associated adventures. Just recently reporting to the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and Curlew National Grasslands as the Forest Supervisor, I'm blessed with yet another opportunity to embark on new trails of renewal and discovery.

While I have not yet had the time to explore the many miles of actual Forest trails, my family and I did seize a sunny autumn day for a

short jaunt along the Teton Basin Ranger District's Sheep Bridge Trail. Even at the snail's pace of my three flower-picking, tag-playing, shrieking-with-delight daughters, I was able to stretch my legs and fill my lungs with the rejuvenating reasons trails are so important to many of us. Like our winding life paths, Forest trails present endless opportunities to connect in very life-giving and awe-inspiring ways with things bigger than ourselves. Oddly enough, our globally linked daily lives don't often provide us the same benefits.

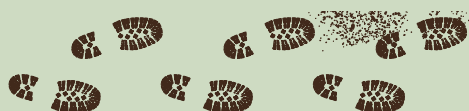
The faces of my three young trail-blazers while on our recent hike remind me why our National Forest trails remain evermore necessary in a modern world of digitally focused and sedentary lifestyles—the opportunity to connect. When we unplug, look up from our screens, and take that first trail step, our physical, social, and spiritual connections suddenly multiply. The Caribou-Targhee National Forest and Curlew National Grasslands provides its visitors with the gift of thousands of miles of such connections. I am thrilled to serve as a steward of this resource, and I hope you have an opportunity to experience and share what connections are out there waiting.

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TRAIL STORIES

Connecting Trails and Agencies -see page 2



Connecting Trails and Agencies

It is a sunny morning and you are riding your ATV along Tex Creek Trail 179 towards the western edge of the Palisades Ranger District's 200,000 acres of backcountry. Absorbed in the beauty of the forest, your journey abruptly ends as you come to an open gate marked with a "No Trespassing" sign. A quick glance at your map shows that if you could just make it about a mile and a half south to trail 157 an entire system of trails would become available. You decide turning around isn't for you. Your decision becomes whether or not to go "off-road" and risk possible fines and damage to the forest, or to ignore the "No Trespassing" sign and strain the relationship between the private land owner and the public.

This all-to-familiar story will no longer have to be played out thanks to a joint effort between the Palisades Ranger District and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR). The two organizations, which have a long history of working together, have created a new option for riders who reach the end of trail 179. Instead of being forced to turn around or break the rules, they will be greeted by a freshly cut trail, including a 25 foot bridge over Tex Creek, that connects back to the rest of the Fall Creek trail system.

The level of commitment and enthusiasm shown by the ten-person team consisting of Forest Service and IDPR employees allowed the project to be completed in an astounding ten days' time. As the two agencies wind down for the winter, talks of projects in the coming year have already begun. In the meantime, the new trail serves as a good example of the accomplishments made possible from the long lasting partnership between the Palisades Ranger District and the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation.



The new Tex Creek Bridge finished in mid-October, 2014.



The Island Park Community Non-Motorized Trail Project

The Island Park Community Non-Motorized Trail Project is a concept that was identified by the Island Park Gem Community Team in their July 1998 Community Development Plan. Members of the Gem Team and Sawtell Fun Run Committee partnered with the Ashton/Island Park Ranger District to identify a route, approximately 23 miles, connecting Harriman State Park and Henry's Lake. Over the last several years new trail construction has been completed on the Box Canyon and Coffee Pot Rapids trails. The rest of the trail is complete. Approximately 2,800 feet of new trail was constructed in 2014 and signs were installed. A map will be created this winter and the signing will be completed in the spring.



This project has been an ongoing project between Island Park Community groups and the U.S. Forest Service. The purpose of the community trail is to provide non-motorized opportunities for those who seek this type of recreational experience. Many wonderful volunteers have committed labor and funds to see the completion of this project.

“This is really happening, thank you!” Connie Funkhouser – Island Park Community Trail Supporter / Sawtell Fun Run Supporter.



Coffee Pot Section of Trail

Safety Tips: Winter Activities

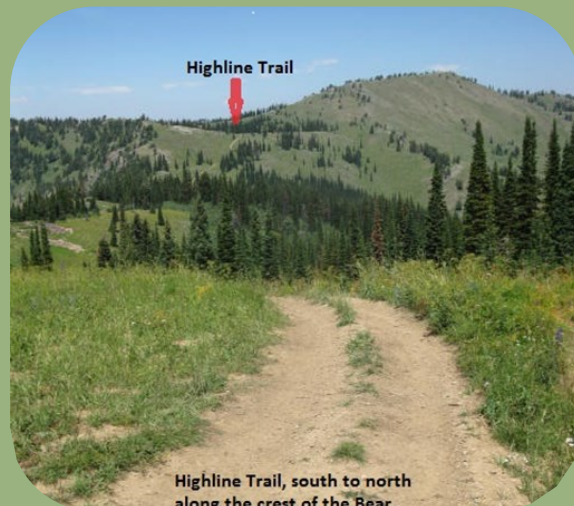


Be prepared for winter activities by wearing a helmet and an avalanche beacon. Dressing in layers will help keep you warm and dry.



The Highline National Recreation Trail

The Highline is a National Recreation Trail located on the Montpelier Ranger District of the Caribou-Targhee NF. This long distance trail follows the crest of the Bear River mountain range from the Utah border, north to Soda Springs, Idaho. It is over 60 miles long and traverses through forests and high elevation terrain. Some sections follow forest roads along the way. The route is open to ATVs with the exception of 6 miles west of Bloomington Lake, which is currently open to motorcycles only due to difficult terrain in this area. The trail sections can be accessed from various roads and trails along its length, providing opportunities for many shorter riding loops. Conditions vary from easy to more difficult riding in occasionally rough terrain. The trail is especially popular with a few hardy off-road motorcyclists for its long distance challenge. Scenery from the higher elevations along the way is awe-inspiring and some of the best in southeast Idaho.



Trail Crew Leader

The Project

There are stretches of the trail in need of maintenance or reconstruction, as well as new signing. Grant money was awarded by the State of Idaho to kick off the project. The Eastern Idaho RAC committee also provided some funding for the work ahead. In 2014 the Montpelier/Soda Springs recreation crew began a multi-year project to assess the trails condition, begin maintenance/ reconstruction work and install new signs. The primary goal is to clearly mark (with signs) the trails location along its entire length and maintain or repair the tread where needed to provide a safe and enjoyable riding experience.

2014 - During this first summer several miles of the route were traveled by ATV and the needed work documented. In July, the seasonal trail crew and recreation staff reconstructed a one mile section of the Highline south of Soda Springs, Idaho. This work was accomplished with our Sweco trail dozer. Dozer work primarily involves reconstructing tread to prevent erosion and repair trail damage.

Also, signs to identify the routes location were purchased. Their installation will begin during the 2015 field season.



Veteran trail rider

Al Taylor Cabin By Ron Schlader, Dubois District Ranger



Albert E. Taylor of Pocatello submitted a special use request to construct a 14-foot by 16-foot cabin next to the pristine Steel Creek on the Dubois Ranger District. He wanted to use the cabin as a summer house and a hunting lodge. Requests like this are normally denied today because it does not fit in with our land management goals, but in 1935 it was a way to connect people with the recreational opportunities our public lands had to offer.

Mr. Taylor submitted his request on June 10, 1935. A month later on July 12, he was awarded a special use permit for the huge sum of \$7.50 and our era of recreation residences began. Also indicative of this time period was the issuance of the permit without a termination date.

Age eventually took its toll on Mr. Taylor and the cabin. On April 30, 1997 he offered the cabin to the Targhee Forest Supervisor as a gift expecting that mandatory termination of his permit was but a few years off. Mr. Taylor died in Nov., 2002. Al's son Arlen turned the cabin keys over to the Dubois District on Jan. 24, 2007.

Then District Ranger Richard Newton saw the value in maintaining the integrity of the degraded structure and submitted the restoration of the cabin as a Passport in Time (PIT) project. Volunteers and district employees spent the past six years replacing the foundation, rotten logs and upgrading the rodent infested interior.

The finishing touches were put on the cabin at the end of the 2013 field season with the installation of propane lights. Recreation Program Manager Bill Davis began the painstaking process of having the cabin added to the Forest Service cabin rental program and it was open to the public in January, 2014.

Located next to the Steel Creek Campground, the cabin is equipped with wooden bunk beds that will accommodate six people. It has an antique wood stove that district recreation staff members Steve Stroud and Dave Price restored for cooking and heating. There is also a stone fireplace to take the chill off those cold fall mornings which was also rebuilt.

The area is rich in Native American history, including the Nez Perce National Historic Trail Auto Tour nearby. Recreational activities include hiking, biking, horseback riding, fishing, hunting or taking a day hike up to Aldous Lake via the Continental Divide Trail 004 to watch the Bald Eagles.



The cabin has seen a 95% occupancy rate from May 1 to the end of the general hunting season. We also expect a successful winter season from snowmobilers and cross country skiers. Reading the positive feedback from the multitude of renters thus far has made the time and effort into restoring Mr. Taylor's legacy a worthwhile endeavor for the Dubois Ranger District.



YCC Crew completes Moose Creek Trail

The YCC Crew completes Moose Creek Trail



The Moose Creek Trail is a 6.3 mile long trail that can be accessed either from Warm River Springs Cabin or Fish Creek Road. It has been utilized by avid hikers and many girls camp hiking groups who spend a week at the nearby Rock Creek Girl's Camp. Thanks to a crew of hard-working and dedicated Fremont County high school students and their leader, the trail is complete.

In 2010, the Ashton/Island Park Ranger District was awarded Recreation Advisory Committee and Idaho Department of Park and Recreation funding for much needed improvements to the

Moose Creek Trail. In 2014, funding for the Moose Creek Trail was finally able to be utilized with the hiring of the 2014 Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) crew. The YCC crew was comprised of six students and one leader. Over the 2014 summer season, the crew spent most of their eight weeks building drainage dips, water bars, installing signs, and reconstructing 1.5 miles of the Moose Creek Trail. In early August 2014, the YCC crew completed the trail improvements, and celebrated their victory by helping the Ashton/Island Park Ranger District offer yet, another excellent hiking experience to the public.



"To find new things, take the path you took yesterday."

- John Burroughs

